

United States Senate

July 22, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write to request your full and fair consideration of the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad's ("Railroad") application for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant funding for its Animas River Bridge Replacement project.

The Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad provides a direct connection between the two vibrant communities of Durango and Silverton in rural Southwest Colorado. The Railroad has an estimated annual economic impact of nearly \$200 million and transported 270,000 travelers in 2019. A vital part of this connection is a 242-foot bridge that crosses the Animas River that is currently in a state of overstress and in need of replacement. Additionally, another bridge in a different area on the rail line has recently been washed out from heavy rains, which will cause further economic stress for the Railroad. CRISI grant funding for the Animas River Bridge project would greatly benefit the Railroad as it addresses this recent washout, as well as vegetation removal projects.

The Railroad is seeking CRISI funding to construct a replacement bridge parallel to the existing structure. A new bridge will ensure the safety of passengers traveling between destinations while still allowing them to visit these tourism-reliant communities during the period of construction.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration for the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad's application.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator